

Amendments to the Specification

The following refers to the paragraph numbering as indicated in the application *as filed*:

Please replace paragraph [0002] with the following replacement paragraph:

[0002] There are many games of chance that require substantial skill and knowledge to be able to play well such as poker style games, Bridge, Euchre, Hearts and Cribbage. Even though the game process is dependent on chance, through the random dealing of cards, a knowledgeable and skilled player is, over time, usually more successful than the unskilled competitor ~~competition~~. For instance, the skill of a poker player is usually gauged by the amount of money the player has won by the end of a session and not by how many times the player has had a winning hand. This monetary success depends on the betting strategy of the skilled player, which includes the choice of not playing bad hands, as well as, betting appropriately on good hands. In the short term, the elements of chance may predominate but skill plays a substantial and defining role in the final outcome. In addition to the chance elements introduced by the dealt cards, there is a significant amount of unpredictability introduced by player interaction that adds to the play and characteristics of each game. Players act and react accordingly using their skills to allow them to control or minimize these unpredictabilities. Most skill games have unpredictabilities that form the basis for the application of skill sets and judging criteria. When a player has control over and can react to unpredictabilities then these do not constitute elements of chance.

Please replace paragraph [0005] with the following replacement paragraph:

[0005] In prior art network-based game systems, where players compete head to head against a computer, it is relatively simple to have all competitors in a given tournament play an identical hand and compare the outcome. The player who scores the highest score under the same playing conditions becomes the winner. This is the scoring basis for many of the skill games played on the Internet presently. It can be applied to games of mixed chance and skill, however this environment is sterile and lacking the player interaction that accounts for much of the skill in playing poker and other similar games. The normal characteristics and playability of the game

are not maintained. For example, in the case of video poker, the only skill set that usually comes in to play is the knowledge of the law of probability and the player cannot significantly affect the outcome of the game.

Please replace paragraph [0016] with the following replacement paragraph:

[0016] Turning to Figure 1, a schematic diagram of a system for implementing a first embodiment of a method of determining the skill level of an individual in a tournament setting is shown. In the present example, there are sixteen individuals who have been selected to participate in a card tournament. The system 10 comprises individuals 12 (~~seen as interacting with computers 13 13a-13p~~), which are connected over a network, such as the Internet, to a host server 14. The host server 14 is also connected to a database 16 which stores tournament information. The host server 14 controls the tournament and handles the game play interaction between the individuals 12. As can be seen in Figure 2, each of the computers 13 includes a game application 18 and a library 20. The game application 18 comprises proprietary software for the configuration of the tournament game play while the library 20 receives and transmits data packets from and to the host server 14. An application program interface (API) 17 controls the communication between the game application 18 and the library 20, as well as, the communication between the library 20 and the host server 14. The host server 14, tracks changes in the database 16 and updates each library 20 with necessary modifications to the software component of the game application 18. An input device 22 is connected to the computer to allow ~~a player~~ individuals 12 to control the computer 13, i.e. to play their cards. The computer 13 includes a computer screen to provide displayed information to the player.

Please replace paragraph [0017] with the following replacement paragraph:

[0017] In operation, as outlined by the flowchart of Figure 3, after each of the individuals 12 has connected to the host server 14 via their computer 13 (step 100), the host server 14 divides the individuals 12 into tournament groups for playing a game such as poker (step 102). In the present example, the individuals 12 are divided into 4 tournament groups such as tournament group 1, tournament group 2, tournament group 3 and tournament group 4. After the tournament groups

are determined, each of the individuals 12 is given a table designation and table position (step 104). In the present embodiment, the tables are designated as Table A, Table B, Table C and Table D while the positions are designated as 1, 2, 3 and 4 as schematically shown in Figure 4. Therefore table A comprises players A1, A2, A3 and A4, table B comprises players B1, B2, B3 and B4, table C comprises players C1, C2, C3 and C4 and table D comprises players D1, D2, D3 and D4. Unlike other prior art tournaments whereby the individuals at each table compete among themselves to determine the most skilled player, the method of the present invention is directed at determining the most skilled player by comparing the ~~players~~ individuals 12 seated in the same position at each table (or in the same tournament group). Therefore, players A1, B1, C1 and D1 compete in tournament group 1, players A2, B2, C2 and D2 compete in tournament group 2, players A3, B3, C3 and D3 compete in tournament group 3 and players A4, B4, C4 and D4 compete in tournament group 4. Preferably, the ~~players~~ individuals 12 are ranked based on their previous play prior to being divided into tournament groups so that ~~players~~ individuals 12 with similar skill may be distributed evenly among the tables. It will be recognized that such an arrangement will avoid an excess of skilled players at one table.

Please replace paragraph [0018] with the following replacement paragraph:

[0018] The host server 14 then deals the cards (step 106) to the ~~players~~ individuals 12, to commence the tournament by sending messages to the libraries 20 of the computers ~~13 13a to 13p~~ to indicate which cards have been dealt to the individual 12. The library 20 receives the information and transmits this information to the game application 18 which displays the card hand on the computer screen. The cards hands that are dealt to the individuals 12 at each table is mirrored over each of the tables such that all of the ~~players~~ individuals 12 in each tournament group receive the same card hand. However, all of the card hands between each of the individuals 12 at the table are different. This is achieved by pre-programming the host server 14 to deal pre-determined card hands to table positions.

Please replace paragraph [0019] with the following replacement paragraph:

[0019] After the card hands are dealt, the individuals 12 at each table compete against each other

in the selected card game while the host server 14 monitors the game play (step 108). For poker, each of the individuals 12 are provided a starting money value. The individuals 12 attempt to create the highest scoring poker hand using the cards they are dealt in order to increase their money value. Networked game play involving computers and input devices will be known to one skilled in the art. The game proceeds with the individuals 12 playing their hands and exchanging cards with the deck. This is facilitated by the individual 12 using the input device 22 to select the cards to be discarded. After the game application 18 senses the actions of the individual 12, this information is communicated to the library 20 which sends a message to the host server 14 indicating how many cards the ~~player~~ individual 12 wants to exchange. The host server 14 then accesses the database 16 to determine which cards to exchange and sends a message back to the library to indicate the new cards. The library 20 then transmits this information to the game application 18 and the game application updates the card hand on the computer screen. During the round of poker play, players may bet or fold. For each bet, ante or fold, the library 20 sends a message to the host server 14 to indicate the play of the individual 12. The database 16 is updated each time a new money value is submitted for an individual 12. The information on bets placed by the individual 12 are thus made available to other ~~players~~ individuals 12 at the same table. These ~~players~~ individuals 12 see the bets placed by the other ~~players~~ individuals 12 at their table in real-time and use this information to decide on their own actions. After each card hand is completed, the host server 14 determines which ~~players~~ individuals 12 have earned money and which ~~players~~ individuals 12 have lost money and updates the individuals' libraries 20 and the database 16 accordingly (step 110). The host server 14 then determines if a pre-determined time limit for tournament play has elapsed (step 111). If it has not, the individuals 12 are then dealt a new card hand (step 106) which is once again replicated over each of the other tables. In this manner, the ~~players~~ individuals 12 in tournament group 1 at each table continuously receive the same cards. If the time limit has elapsed, the host server 14 determines which individuals have won their tournament game by accessing the database 16 (step 112). By comparing the money values of each of the individuals 12 in each tournament (step 114), the host server 14 determines which individual 12 won each tournament group (step 116). Since each of these individuals 12 has been dealt the same cards, the most skilled player of each tournament group is determined to be the one with the highest money value since it is the ~~player's~~ individual's application of their skill in the poker card game which determines the outcome.

Please replace paragraph [0022] with the following replacement paragraph:

[0022] After the initial round of play has been completed, the process may then be repeated so that the most skilled in each tournament group may be pitted against each other while the second place finishers of each tournament group compete against each other and similarly with the third and fourth place players of each tournament group. The four ~~players~~ individuals 12 ranked as the most skilled in their respective tournament groups would be dealt hands from the host server 14 as two tables with two ~~players~~ individuals 12 at each table. In this manner, two most skilled ~~players~~ individuals 12 may be determined by the host server 14 from the group of sixteen individuals rather than four winners from the four tournament groups.

Please replace paragraph [0024] with the following replacement paragraph:

[0024] In the event of a communication disruption or computer malfunction, there is the possibility that an ~~player~~ individual 12 may become disconnected from the host server 14. If this were to happen, upon detection, the host server 14 would preferably automatically post the blind or ante, and subsequently fold, until such time as the ~~player~~ individual 12 re-established their connection to the host server 14. Alternatively, a ~~player~~ individual 12 may select at the commencement of the tournament from a selection of strategies. In the event of a disconnection, the selected strategy would be initiated and followed by the host server until such time as the player re-established their connection.

Please replace paragraph [0025] with the following replacement paragraph:

[0025] In poker, it may be difficult to monitor the number of draw cards for an individual 12. Individuals 12 are generally allowed to exchange one to three cards in their card hand with cards from the deck. This may cause the cards hands between individuals 12 in each tournament group to be different since each individual 12 may not select the same number of cards for exchange. This introduces an element of chance and reduces the focus on skill level of the ~~player~~ individual 12. For a draw game to work (such as poker), a standard card draw may be implemented which

applies to each individual 12 equally. Alternatively, the draw cards may be prearranged up to a maximum allowable number so that the drawing does not affect the remainder of the deck of cards.

Please replace paragraph [0026] with the following replacement paragraph:

[0026] Alternatively, the statistics of all of the ~~players~~ individuals 12 maybe stored in the database 16 so that when the individuals 12 play at a later date, they may be grouped with other individuals 12 of equal skill level. ~~Players~~ Individuals 12 of like ranking may be organised in a tournament group. It is not necessary that all individuals 12 at a table be of similar skill level since the individuals 12 are not judged against each other. Therefore the dispersement of skill may be equal for each of the tournament tables.

Please replace paragraph [0027] with the following replacement paragraph:

[0027] Alternatively, the tournament may occur in a physical environment where the card hands are dealt by a dealer. In this manner, it would be more time consuming to set up the cards such that the individuals 12 in each tournament group at each table are dealt the same hand.

Please replace paragraph [0029] with the following replacement paragraph:

[0029] In yet another embodiment, if the tournament game involves partnering individuals 12, computer-implemented players may be used which are programmed to play cards on computer 13 according to cards played by each individual 12, or individuals 12 may compete against computer-implemented players with their final score compared with other individuals 12 competing against the same computer-implemented player.